

The Rise of Greek Civilization

SECTION 1

BEFORE YOU READ

Reach Into Your Background

What makes the community where you live special? What makes it a community? Does it

have traditions and customs of its own? What are they? What does your community share with its neighbors?

Questions to Explore

1. How did geography influence the development of civilization in Greece?
2. How did democracy develop in Athens?

Key Terms

| | |
|------------|------------|
| peninsula | aristocrat |
| epic | tyrant |
| acropolis | democracy |
| city-state | |

Key People and Places

Homer
Solon
Troy

First there was nothing. Then came Mother Earth. The gods of Night and Day appeared next, and then starry Sky. Earth and Sky created the Twelve Titans (TYT unz). These great gods rebelled against their father Sky and took away his power. The youngest of the Titans, Cronos, ruled in his father's place. In time, Cronos had six children. The youngest, mighty Zeus (zoos), toppled Cronos from his throne.

With such words, the people of ancient Greece described the struggles of their gods. Like their gods, the people of Greece had to struggle for power and independence. Their struggles began with the land itself.

Greece's Geographic Setting

The land of Greece looks as if the sea had smashed it to pieces. Some pieces have drifted away to form small, rocky islands. Others barely cling to the mainland. Greece is a peninsula made up of peninsulas. A **peninsula** is an area of land surrounded by water on three sides. Look at the map. As you can see, no part of Greece is very far from the sea.

Mountains are the major landform of Greece. Greece's islands are mostly mountain peaks. Mountains wrinkle the mainland, so there are only small patches of farmland. Only about one fifth of Greece is good for growing crops. No wonder the Greeks became traders and sailors. At times, they even left Greece to found colonies far away.

What was life like for people living in Greece 3,000 years ago? In a way, the ancient Greeks were all islanders. Some lived on real islands completely surrounded by water or on small peninsulas. Others lived on

▼ The sea was an important part of life in ancient Greece. It inspired an artist to decorate this clay pot with soldiers riding dolphins.

